



No. 143: JANUARY – MARCH 2023



Journal of Franciscan Culture
Issued by the Franciscan Friars (OFM) Malta



Quarterly journal of
Franciscan culture published
since April 1986.

Founders:
John Abela ofm
Raymond Camilleri ofm

Available at:
<http://www.franciscanstudies.com>

All original material is
Copyright © TAU Franciscan
Communications 2023

Contents

- Editorial
- The Inauguration of the Franciscan Provincial Library: 12 December 1972
- Identità e autocoscienza dei Frati Minori XXX Convegno Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani
- «Francisce, unam de micis omnibus hostiam facito». Bonaventure's view of Francis' role in the *Regula Bullata*»

143

Editorial

PRESERVING OUR CULTURAL PATRIMONY

The aim of this Franciscan review is that of contributing to the knowledge of the Franciscan life in the world of culture. The long history of the Franciscan Order has been marked by eminent figures who have been protagonists in the fields of philosophy, theology, arts, sciences, literature, and many other branches of learning. They have produced a rich patrimony which we still cherish and which we are rightly proud to show.

While our Order invites us to embrace our future with hope and move on, it is important that we do not forget our past and the great contribution that the Franciscan family has given to culture. In many Franciscan friaries we still preserve precious documents in archives, and also a rich bibliographical patrimony in our libraries. Our duty is that of taking good care of this legacy, which is being discovered and appreciated by many scholars in various fields of learning.

Our Franciscan intellectual tradition is part and parcel of our heritage, and we are called to study it and propose it in the world of culture, just as our forefathers did. It is true that they lived in a moment in which the culture of *Christianitas* was the trademark of the European culture. Alas our Europe has rejected this historical truth. However, it has not rejected the cultural richness of Christianity as a tool to understand its identity. We might not be called to propose a culture of *Christianitas*. Our libraries and archives are an asset to bridge the gap between our culture and its past. As Franciscans we can be a link.

Noel Muscat ofm

THE INAUGURATION OF THE FRANCISCAN PROVINCIAL LIBRARY 12 December 1972

Noel Muscat OFM

On Tuesday 12 December 1972 Fr. Augustine Portelli OFM, Minister Provincial, officially inaugurated the new hall where the Franciscan Provincial Library was placed after nearly three centuries during which it was housed in a smaller hall in what are nowadays two rooms of the friary parlour and the hall of the main staircase. The Library door was just adjacent to the old staircase that used to lead down from the large corridor of the friary to the entrance of the friary, which was in Saint Ursola Street. The new hall for the Library is a spacious rectangular hall that lies directly above the south aisle of the Church of Santa Marija ta' Ġesù (Ta' Ġiežu) in Valletta, overlooking Porta del Monte (Victoria Gate), the Grand Harbour and with a view over Fort Saint Angelo. For this reason the friars called this section of the friary by the name «Belvedere». The choice of the hall was an ingenious one, since it lies directly above the strong arched side-chapels of the south aisle, and therefore can withstand the weight of tons of books. It is also a rather quiet and secluded section of the friary, ideal for study and research, and has strong and thick walls and large bay windows that let in abundant light for the Library itself and for the church, which is otherwise always in the shade on its northern section, flanked as it

is by high buildings in the steps of St. John Street, between St. Paul Street and St. Ursola Street.

The account of the blessing and inauguration of the new hall for the Library is found in the Chronicle of the Maltese Franciscan Province in a short note stating that the Library was blessed by Fr. Augustine and was transported through the hard work of the new librarian, Fr. Ġorġ Aquilina OFM.¹ Fr. Ġorġ had been appointed Librarian and Archivist on 12 May 1972.²

For this occasion a marble slab was also transported and fixed to the wall on the right-hand side of the door leading into the Library hall. An additional note to the marble slab inscription bears witness of the event of the inauguration of the hall, but only mentions the Minister Provincial, Fr. Augustine Portelli, with no mention at all of the work undertaken by the new Librarian.³ This year therefore marks the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of the new Library Hall, which from a local Library of the Valletta friary became the Library of the Maltese OFM Province. The efforts of Fr. Ġorġ who was instrumental in this project have been evident throughout this half century. Not only did he gather in one Library the many volumes spread out in other friary libraries, particularly those in

¹ Archives of the Franciscan Province [AFP], *Kronaka tal-Provinċja 1973-2007*, f. 27^r.

² AFP, *Fondo P. Ġorġ Aquilina*, Volume 1956 - 1989.

³ The inscription on the marble slab states: *Bibliothecam hanc erexit, ornavit, librosque in ea conclusit R. Patris Josephi Antonii Melitensis ex*

definitoris huius Ven. Cœnobii superioris activitas, solertia, sollicitudo quam R.A.P. Constantius Vella a Melita Lect. Jub. et Vallis Nethi Melitæquæ Prov. Minister, quamplurimis selectissimorum auctorum recentibus voluminibus auxit cuius etiam suasionem huic operi initium sicut et complementum fuit.

the Rabat friary, a good number of which are vintage volumes going back to the 17th and 18th centuries. He also succeeded in developing the Library as a centre of specialised works on Franciscan history and culture. Being an expert historian, he also greatly enriched the Library with books on Maltese history and culture in the Melitensia section. Our aim is not that of delving into the happy and tragic events that concerned the Library during this last half century, but rather to trace its origins and history, with the help of research already published by Fr. Aquilina⁴ just one year before his death on 29th September 2012, in order to appreciate his plan of placing such a treasure of knowledge in the Library Hall where it rightly belongs.

The origins of the Valletta Library

The Maltese Franciscans had two Libraries in their two original friaries, namely one in the friary of Santa Maria di Gesù in Rabat and the other one in the friary with the same name in Valletta. Since the two friaries were part of the Province of Sicily, an inventory of 1600 formed on an *Index* dated 1596 presents a full list of books in the various friaries, but not in those of the two Maltese friaries, because of the insular nature of the Maltese islands.⁵ The Rabat friary, which is the most ancient of the two, was also a house of studies. Here, in an inventory compiled in 1716 by Fr. Vincenzo Filippo Zammit, we know that this library contained 560 volumes and also a collection of manuscripts.

The Valletta friary was also a house for theological studies, as well as being a centre for the learning of Arabic with the aim of forming missionaries to the Levant. Fr.

Liborio Caruana from Hal Qormi (1660-1718) who was Minister Provincial of the Province of Val di Noto e Malta (1705-1708 and 1714-1717), informs us that Fr. Filiberto Peylabere (1622-1685) was the founder of the friary Library with the books he had personally acquired, and that on 27th April 1681 he was officially nominated as Librarian. Fr. Filiberto Peylabere had studied in the *Studium Generale* of the Order in Toulouse, from where he brought many books that he bought with money that he earned from the Knights of Saint John, a total sum of 7000 scudi.

On 23 January 1706 Fr. Liborio issued a Decree in which he ordered that the Library should be well taken care of. Fr. Ġorġ presents the entire text of this important decree, of which we shall here present a rather free English translation:

«Brother Liborio da Malta, etc. Divine help has entrusted to us, although unworthy, to give all the necessary attention we are capable of. Since with our great displeasure we have come to know that many books of the Library of our Friary in Valletta are missing, and since we are also aware that it is impossible to keep the same Library in that pristine state in which it was before the Venerable Father Filiberto Peilabere da Malta died, since it was he who with great effort and with the offerings of the faithful had abundantly increased its collection [of books]; in the Definitory meeting held in our Friary of Terra di Sicilia [Avola] celebrated on 27th April 1681, the other Ministers Provincials our Predecessors, had chosen by law Commissaries Visitators in order to assume and appoint Librarians. Therefore, willing to provide for this negligence, with the power of this present Decree, which we

⁴ Ġ. AQUILINA, *Il-Frangiskani Maltin (Ta' Ġiezu) 1482c – 1965c*, Klabb Kotba Maltin, Malta 2011, 111-114.

⁵ R. LAUDADIO, *La provincia dei frati Minori dell'Osservanza di Trinacria e i suoi libri alla fine del Cinquecento*, in *Franciscana*. Bollettino della Società internazionale di studi francescani, Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto

Medioevo, Spoleto, Vol. VII (2005) 218, footnote 17: *Conuento di Santa Maria di Giesu della citta' vecchia di Malta della diocese di Malta. Conuento di Santa Maria di Giesu della citta' noua di Malta delle diocese di Malta. Gli libri di questi due conuenti di Malta non li habbiamo hauuto per la distantia di quest'isola: se pur detti due conuenti hanno libri.*

want to remain for ever binding, we prescribe, and in virtue of Holy Obedience we strictly command, that within the space of eight days a register should be provided, and placed in the archives in which there should be a complete list of each single book, quintero, folio, or other printed documents, as well as of the manuscripts that belong to the aforementioned Library, and which are presently existing in it. The Venerable Father Guardian, and in his absence the Vicar, plus two Discreets, as well as the Librarian, who is entrusted with the custody of the Library, are bound to sign the register and include in it the seal of our Friary. In the same Inventory, according to the prescribed form, they are to note down all the other books of the Library which will be added or donated in the future. Every year, on a day in the month of January and for all future times, all these friars should present themselves, with the aforementioned Father Guardian or, in his absence, the Vicar, together with the Discreets, and enter the Library, and there, together with the Librarian, check one by one the same books and Inventory and take note of them; at the bottom of the same Inventory they are to make in the same way a note of the revision together with the day, month and Year, and note down the missing books, or else, if nothing is missing in the same Library similarly note it down, as the case may be. If any one of the books, or of written documents, is found to be missing through the fault of the Librarian, or if he has been careless about such matters, he is bound to restore it back to its place without any delay, and from that moment onwards he will be deprived of active and passive voice for five years without any mercy. The aforementioned Father Guardian and Vicar, and the first two Discreets are likewise inflicted with the same penalty in case they are negligent in their duty to revise the books, and they will not be able to preside over solemnities for the same number of years. And lest the books be lost in the future, we command the Librarian, under the same penalty imposed

on him, that under no pretext, cause, reason or question of decoration, shall he let books be taken out of the friary enclosure, except that, for service and for the cases concerning our Friary, he may take them out, either by himself or by someone else, or by others, but only for the minimum length of time that such a case permits, or that he himself dares to permit such a thing, or to consult, either by word or deed, in any of the aforesaid matters, or to give help in such cases. It is Your duty in those cases to notify the Venerable Father Guardian, and in his absence the Vicar, of anything that you hear, or see written down, or being attempted in prejudice of the aforementioned Library. The Guardian and Vicar are obliged, in front of all their brothers, Superiors and any other person whoever he may be, and whose help they need, to see to it that everything is restored to its pristine state and immediately make satisfaction for any damage that has culpably been done in the Library. Whenever there are reasons linked with the Friary, books can be taken out of the Library and brought out of the enclosure, or else they can be taken out for the use of the religious, but only within the enclosure. We will that there should be a register in the possession of the Librarian, in which he notes down the day, month and year as well as the name of the Author with the title of the subject treated in the book. Those who make use of [the book] must sign the register in their own handwriting. Once the use of the said book is concluded, these same books, or quinterni, and folios should be taken back in the same Library under pain of the same penalty, and immediately the restitution of the accomodated books should be noted by the Librarian, also with the designation of the day, month and year in which the book is returned. And if the Librarian permits anything which is done otherwise, every time he permits the occasion for such a practice, he incurs into the same penalties outlined above, save always for the more serious penalties which We or our Successors can inflict according

to the circumstances, according also to those penalties which We have the power to inflict with other permanent punishments in the case of theft of books, or in the case of evil intention to steal books from our Libraries, according to the Bulls of Pope Pius V, *Cum sicut* published on 4th November 1568; Sixtus V, *Cum sicut accepimus*, published on 3rd November 1587, and Innocent X, *Conservationi et manutentioni librorum*, published on 27th July 1651. And not otherwise, etc. And in order that, in the future, no one can state that he is ignorant of [this Decree], we

⁶ Ġ. AQUILINA, *Il-Frangiskani Maltin (Ta' Ġiežu)*, 113 footnote 125: AFP, *Lettere Circolari*, vol. 3 ff. 57-58. Latin text is found in Appendix A, doc. 40 on pages 510-512:

Frater Liborius a Melita, etc. Provincialiatus munus divina clementia Nobis commissum exposcit ut incongruis, ea sedulitate, qua possumus, occurramus. Cum itaque non sine magno nostri animi maerore agnoverimus plures ex Bibliotheca huius nostri Conventus Vallettae defecisse libros, attenta praesertim fere evidenti impossibilitate Bibliothecam ipsam nullatenus reducendi in pristinum statum, in quo erat de tempore decessus ex hoc saeculo Venerandi Patris Fratris Philiberti Peilabere a Melita, qui illam non absque ejus nimio labore ex fidelium elemosinis per ipsum recollectis copiose auxerat ob id a toto Definitorio in nostro Conventu Terrae Aulae celebrato sub die 27 Aprilis 1681 tantisque aliis Ministris Provincialibus Praedecessoribus nostris, ac Commissariis Visitoribus iure meruerit commendari, et in Bibliothecarium assumi, ac nominari: Volentes proinde tanto providere absurdo, vigore praesentis nostri Decreti perpetuo valituri praecipimus, et in virtute Sanctae Obedientiae stricte praecipiendo mandamus, fieri infra octiduum, proximum in libro ad hunc effectum serio conficiendo, et intus archivium omnino servando repertorium omnium, ac singulorum librorum, quinternorum, foliorum, aut scripturarum tam impressorum, quam manuscriptorum ad dictam Bibliothecam pertinentium, et ad praesens in esse existentium, illudque per Venerandos Patres Guardianum, et in ejus absentia per Vicarium et duos primos Discretos, ac Bibliothecarium, in cuius custodia eadem Bibliotheca existere debeat, subscribi, et sigillo huius praedicti nostri Conventus muniri, et in eodem Inventario sub forma modo praescripta adnotari etiam libros eidem Bibliothecae in posterum forsan addendos, donandos, seu assignandos. Et singulis annis una die mensis Januarii cunctis futuris temporibus accedant omnes dicti Patres Guardianus,

command that this [Decree] be read in the refectory in front of the the Fathers who gather at the sound of the bell, and in a similar way it should be copied in parchment and affixed always on the front door of the Library. Given in our Friary of Santa Maria di Gesù of the City of Valletta during the course of our Visitation on 23rd January 1706. Fr. Liborio da Malta, Minister Provincial. With the mandate of His Paternity the Most Reverend [Provincial], Fr. Massimiliano da Malta, Pro-Secretary of the Province.»⁶

seu eo absente Vicarius, et Discreti ad dictam Bibliothecam, ibidemque libros ac Inventarium, praesente quoque Bibliothecario, singillatim revideant, et auscultent; notam in calce ipsius Inventarii de huiusmodi revisione faciant cum adnotatione diei, mensis, et Anni, ac librorum deficientium, si qui forent, vel attestando nil ex eadem Bibliotheca defecisse, prout casus dederit. Quod si librum aliquem, seu scripturam facto, et culpa Bibliothecarii defecisse comperiretur, ille ultra interesse, illico per eum absque ulla mora reficiendum, ex nunc pro tunc, voce activa, et passiva per quinquennium irremissibiliter crearet: quemadmodum etiam in eadem poenam incurrant dicti Patres Guardianus et Vicarius, binique primi Discreti in casu ommissionis revisionis librorum, aliarumque sollemnitatum ut supra quotannis peragendarum. Et ne in futurum libros deperdi, contingat praecipimus ne Bibliothecarius sub eadem poena desuper sibi inflictam quovis sub praetextu, causa, ratione, et quaesito colore libros extra clausuram, nisi tantum pro servitio, et litibus huius nostri Conventus deinceps extrahi, amoveri, asportari, ac tolli vel per se, vel aliquo, seu alios, nec pro minimo temporis spatio quoquo modo permittat, aut consentire audeat, vel consulere neque verbo, aut facto in aliquo ex praedictis alicui opem, vel auxilium praestare. Quinimmo quilibet Vestrum teneatur quicquid in praedictis audiverit, vel scriberit factum, aut fieri tentatum in praeiudicium dictae Bibliothecae notificare Venerando Patri Guardiano, et in ejus absentia Vicario. Qui Guardianus et Vicarius teneantur iuxta omnes eorum, suorumque Superiorum ac aliorum quorumcumque posse, quorum auxilio indigerint, curare cum effectu omnia in pristinum restitui, omnique damno in Bibliotheca causato per culpabiles statim satisfieri. Quoties autem pro causis ipsius nostri Conventus extra Clausuram, seu pro usu religiosorum eiusque intra tamen Clausuram libros a dicta Bibliotheca amoveri contigerit. Volumus, fieri utentes in liberculo in posse Bibliothecarii servando

In 1729 the new Library, which was rebuilt during the time of Fr. Giuseppe Antonio Bellia, was enriched with the books brought by Fr. Constanzo Vella (1691-1759), who had enlarged it with hundreds of volumes that he had acquired with the money he earned in his preaching tours in Malta and Sicily.⁷

A good description of the Valletta Franciscan Library is given to us by Fr. Giovanni Antonio Mercieca (c.1660-1753) in his *Cronica duorum conventuum*, which

apocha cum designatione diei, mensis, et anni continente nomen Auctoris cum titulo materiae, de qua tractat, illamque per ipsos utentes proprio caractere subscribi; et finito usu, dictos libros, seu quinterna, et folia ad dictam Bibliothecam respective sub eadem poena referre teneantur, et statim contra dictam notam fieri debeat manu Bibliothecarii alia restitutionis librorum accomodatorum cum designatione pariter diei, mensis, et anni, in quo restitutio ipsa fieri contingat. Et si aliter quomodocumque Bibliothecarius ipse fieri permittat, in poenas superius comminatas toties quoties casus dederit, omnino incurrat; salvis semper gravioribus poenis iuxta facti circumstantias per Nos, nostrosque Successores infligendis, prout quoque illaesis in earum robore permanentibus aliis poenas occasione librorum furto, et ad malum finem ex nostris Bibliothecis subtrahendorum inflictis per Bullas Pii Papae V = Cum Sicut = editas die 4 Novembris 1568; Sixti V = Cum sicut accepimus = emanatas die 3 Novembris 1587, ac Innocentii X = Conservationi et manutentioni librorum = proditam die 27 Julii 1651. Et non aliter etc. Et ne per quempiam de praemissis in futurum ignorantia allegari valeat mandamus, praesens nostrum Decretum hora mensae in refectorio cunctis Patribus ibidem ad sonum campanellae congregatis perlegi, et consimile in pergamento conscriptum in praedicta Bibliotheca palam appensum perpetuo detineri. Datum in dicto nostro Conventu Sanctae Mariae Jesu Civitatis Vallettae in decursu nostrae Visitationis ac die 23 Januarii 1706. Fr. Liborius a Melita, Minister Provincialis. De mandato Paternitatis Fratris Admodum Reverendae, Fr. Maximilianus a Melita Provinciae Pro-Secretarius.

⁷ AFP, Sectio III, *Acti Originali*, III, doc. 10.

⁸ GIOVANNI ANTONIO MERECIECA, *Cronica duorum conventuum*, in AFP, Sectio III, Ms. ff. 73-74.

Tertiu[m] continet Bibliothecam nuper erecta[m] ex adverso scalæ maioris; spatii[m] duaru[m] cellaru[m] occupans p[er] longu[m] varijs libroru[m] repositorijs hinc, inde voluminibus diversoru[m] Authoru[m], et materioru[m] refertis

is a first-hand account presentation of the Library that had just been renovated.⁸ The *Cronica* was written in 1731 and is a precious document that sheds light on the history of the two first friaries of the Franciscan Observants in Malta, namely that of Rabat and that of Valletta, both known as Santa Maria di Gesù, and *Ta' Ġiežu* by the local Maltese population, a Semitic rendering of the Sicilian name *Di Giesu*.

in utroque pariete constans, quibus recens Provi[nc]iæ Minister R[everendus] A[dmodum] P[ater] Constantius Vella Melitensis, virtutis amore mirè succensus ex assiduæ prædicat[i]onis proventu, quamplures recentior<u>m Juris Canonici, aliorumque doctoru[m] selectissimos codices adiecit, et in dies adjicit: quæ o[mn]ia cratibus ex aurichalco distracto intextis suis locis, et ordinibus firmiter clauduntur. Et ne benefactorum huius Bibliothecæ decadat in postu[m] memoria, apposita est in eius interiori prospectu marmorea tabula dicens:

D[eo] O[ptimo] M[aximo]

Bibliothecam hanc erexit, ornavit, librosque in ea conclusit

R[everendi] Pr[ovincialis] Joseph Antonij Melit[ensis]

ex Diff[inito]rij huius Ven[erandi] Cœnobij

Superioris activitas, solertia, sollicitudo,

quam R[everendus] A[dmodum] P[ater]

Constantius Vella á Melita Lect[or]r Jubi[latus] et Vallis Nethi,

Melitæque Prov[inci]æ Min[iste]r, quamplurimis selectissimorum Authoru[m] recentibus voluminibus auxit:

Cuius etia[m] suasionem huic operi initium, sicut et complementu[m] fuit Anno MDCCXXIX.

Justum quoque est meminisse hoc loco q[uo]nd[am] A[dmodum] V[enerabili] P[atris] Philiberti Peylaberis á Melita, qui du[m] viveret, libroru[m] litteratorumque amantiss[im]us antiquiore[m] Bibliotheca[m] pretiosissimis Codicibus locupletavit, inter quos Sanctoru[m] Patru[m] volumina 27. Sancti Augustini alia 12. Sanctoru[m] Ambrosij, et Bonaventuræ opera, Tertulliani quoque, et alioru[m] pluriu[m] Doctoris item Subtiliss[im]i, suorumque sequaciu[m], et Angelici pariter cu[m] suis Asseclis. Item humanæ vitæ theatru[m], Polyanthea, Auriphodina, Sylva allegorica, ditionaria Gallica Historica, multa que alia opera é Lugdunensi officina, el<a>eemosynis Equitum Jerosolymitanoru[m] Gallorum, quibus erat á confessionibus, delata summa benemerentia cumulavit.

The ceiling of the Library was ornamented with a painting that shows the triumph of the Franciscan School, the Immaculate Conception and the Franciscan Doctors. This beautiful painting has been attributed to Francesco Zahra. In the painting we note the figure of Fr. Constanzo Vella, who is holding in his hand the inscription: *Imitari non pigeat quod celebrare delectat* [He does not hesitate to imitate what he delights to celebrate]. According to Rafel Bonnici Cali, ‘the painting is probably a late work of the artist Giovanni Nicola Buhagiar (1698-1752), aided by his disciple Francesco Zahra (1710-1773), who was still a young artist, and it shows a link with the Neapolitan art of Francesco Solimena (1657-1747).’⁹ The painting used to hang in the old Library until 1970, when it was placed in the new Library Hall. During these last 50 years it has suffered some apparent damage, and may be in need of a thorough restoration, since there are parts of it which are flaking off the edges. The painting in its upper half depicts Christ holding the scepter of his kingship and the globe in his left hand, and pointing with his right finger his Immaculate Mother the Virgin Mary with twelve stars and the moon under her feet. At their feet kneels St. Francis in ecstasy, with two angels above him holding the coat of arms of the Franciscan Order with the words *Doctrina et Religio*. The lower part of the painting presents a crowd of

Franciscan saints and doctors. They include St. Anthony of Padua, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Bonaventure, St. John Capistran, St. James of the March, a Pope (Innocent III or Honorius III?), Cardinal Hugolinus (Ugo) of Ostia, Pierre D’Auriole, St. Benvenute, Blessed John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, Alexander of Hales, Richard of Middletown, John Peckham, John Parenti, Luke Wadding. Among them, at the very bottom, there is the portrait of Fr. Costanzio Vella holding the parchment with the words quoted above.

In their Circular Letters the Provincials would insist upon making inventories of the books in the Library as well as the documents in the Archives,¹⁰ in order that these be well conserved in the Provincial Archives.¹¹ In the Catalogue published in 1738, I personally counted 3269 volumes registered in the Valletta Library.¹² A number of these volumes still exists bearing the autographical notes of Fr. Constanzo Vella in their inside cover. On 1 February 1779, Fr. Pier Ferdinando Madà began another *Catalogo de’ Libri*.¹³

These historical notes, given to us by the late Fr. Ġorg Aquilina, speak volumes about the rich legacy that our predecessors in the Order and in the Maltese Franciscan setting of the 17th and 18th centuries have left us. It is up to us to continue the good work done by these friars centuries ago, and cherished in more recent times with the

⁹ RAFEL BONNICI CALÌ, *It-Trionf tal-Iskola Frangiskana. Pittura fis-saqaf tal-Biblijoteka fil-Kunvent Ta’ Ġiezu – Valletta*, in *Anglu tal-Paci*, 35 (Mejju-Ġunju 1958) 19: “Din il-pittura, skond il-fehma tiegħi, hija aktar xogħol tard tal-pittur Ġannikol Buhagiar meġhun mill-alliev tiegħu iż-żagħżuġh Frangisk Zahra, u turina rabta ma’ l-arti Naplitana, l-aktar max-xogħol ta’ Frangisk Solimena.”

¹⁰ AFP, Sectio III, *Lettere Circolari [1721-1736]*, 6. F. 312. Letter of Fr. Gian Costanzo [Parnis] 27th June 1732: Fra Gian Costanzo di Malta dell’Ord[in]e dei Min[o]ri della Regolare Osservanza [...] In oltre, i P.P. Superiori locali si facciano trovar in ordine l’inventario delle Librerie, Archivi, Chiese, Sagrestie, Suppellettili e Officine.

¹¹ AFP, Sectio III, *Lettere Circolari*, 8, f. 44. [Registro delle Lettere Circolari de Superiori, e principia dal 1737 fino all’anno 1751].

¹² AFP, Sectio III, *Catalogo di tutti i Libri del Ven. Convento di Santa Maria di Gesù della Città Valletta, in cui si notano così le materie come i nomi e cognomi degli’ autori col num.º de’ tomi e parti come pure le scaffè o armari, ed anco gli ordini delle scaffè, ove si trovano collocati. Finito alli 9 <Settem>bre 1738.*

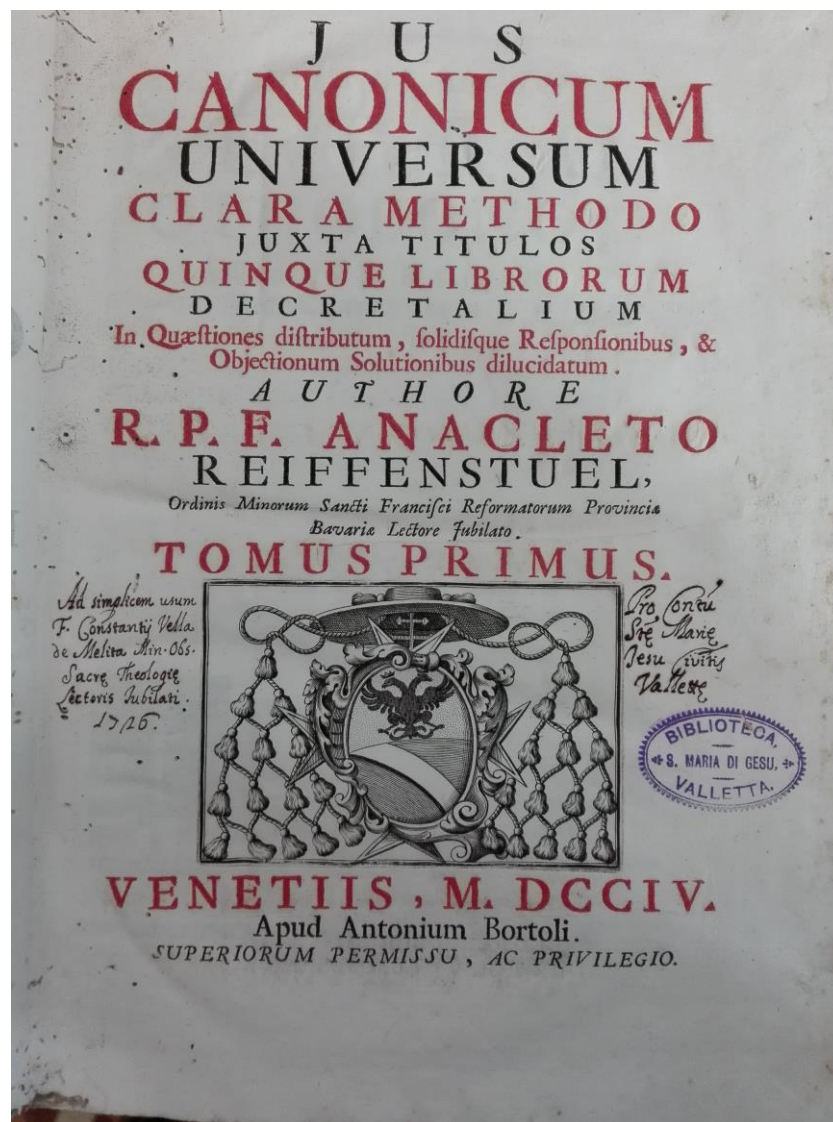
¹³ AFP, Sectio III, *Lettere Circolari*, 4, f. 120-123^v. Cfr. also: *Inventario di tutti i libri della Biblioteca del Ven. Convento di Santa Maria di Giesù della Città Valletta*, - undated – although it is evident that it was compiled before the inventory done by Fr. Ferdinando, AFP, Sectio III, *Atti Originali*, XVII, 170-183^v.

inauguration of the Library Hall above Ta' Ġiezu Church, 50 years ago.

It is thanks to Fr. Ġorġ Aquilina, of whom we have just celebrated the 10th anniversary of his demise on 29th September 2012, that we can now appreciate the rich legacy that entire generations of Franciscans have left us in the field of books and archival documents.

Unfortunately ignorance and negligence have sometimes taken their toll. In spite of the enormous effort that is still needed to catalogue all the books and documents present in the Valletta OFM Provincial Library and Archives, and in spite of the fact that many documents need restoration and expert care, we hope to be able to keep alive the awareness of our grave responsibility in this field and of the need to invest in the care of our Franciscan artistic and archival patrimony.

«To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child. For what is the worth of human life, unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the records of history?» [Marcus Tullus Cicero (106 – 43BC)].¹⁴



One of the books (1704) bearing the autograph signature of Fr. Constanzio Vella (1726)

¹⁴ «Nescire autem quid ante quam natus sis acciderit, id est semper esse puerum. Quid enim est aetas hominis, nisi ea memoria rerum veterum cum superiorum aetate contextitur?»

«IDENTITÀ E AUTOCOSCIENZA DEI FRATI MINORI»

50th Congress of the International Society of Franciscan Studies

The International Society of Franciscan Studies (ISFS), founded in 1902 by Paul Sabatier, has celebrated its 50th annual Congress of Franciscan Studies, in collaboration with the Centro Interuniversitario di Studi Francescani (University of Macerata), with the theme «Identità e autocoscienza dei Frati Minori (secc. XIII-XIV)» [Identity and self-awareness of the Friars Minor (13th-14th centuries)] in Palazzo Bernabei, Assisi, on 13-15 October 2022.

The Congress was addressed by various eminent scholars, and was introduced by the President of the ISFS, Stefano Brufani, and was aptly summarised and concluded by Roberto Lambertini of the Centro Interuniversitario di Studi Francescani of the University of Macerata. We present a summary of the proceedings of the Congress, which will be published in the annual acts of the Congresses of the ISFS and which are also available online on the web-site of the Society www.sisf-assisi.it

Grado Giovanni Merlo (Università di Milano) gave the first lecture on the theme «*Ego, frater Franciscus*». He based his analysis on the *Testamentum* of St. Francis, composed during the last weeks before his death in 1226. Francis describes himself to the brothers as *vester servus* (your servant). This goes to show the self-awareness of Francis regarding his religious experience and is a clear indication of the identity of the author of the *Testament*. Although Francis was no longer in charge of his Order, the fact that he uses the latin term

mihi (to me) for 15 times in this autobiographical document shows us how the intensity of the self-awareness of his identity as founder of the Order. It was after his death that the brothers began to question the true intention of Francis, arriving to the point of sending an official delegation of learned brothers to Pope Gregory IX in 1230 in order to ask him whether the *Testament* was binding the brothers in conscience, and also to clarify some obscure points in the *Regula Bullata* of 1223. The Pope's response in the Bulla *Quo elongati* (28th September 1230) was clear regarding the non-obligatory nature of the *Testament*, while at the same time affirming that Gregory could confidently state that he knew the intention of Francis when he helped him to write the Rule at a moment in which he was the Cardinal Protector of the Order, namely Ugo di Ostia. Merlo then developed his talk on the three main parts of the *Testament*, namely what he called: (1) the “existential turn” referring to Francis' experience of conversion, serving the lepers, repairing and praying to Christ in the poor churches, respecting the poor priests because of the ministry of the Eucharist, respecting theologians and preachers of the Word; (2) the passage from the personal dimension of Francis' religious experience to the fraternal dimension, with the gift of the arrival of the first brothers and the form of life that Francis presented to Pope Innocent III for approval, as expressed in the simple lifestyle of the brothers; (3) the exhortative part of the *Testament*, with the frequent use of

the imperatives *caveant, præcipio firmiter, meum Testamentum, non dicant fratres*. The harsh tone of this last part of the *Testament* shows the state of mind and heart of Francis at the end of his life, in a moment in which he was fully conscious of the originality of his calling and that of the brothers. The problem was how the brothers would carry on along the same lines. As so many scholars have already stated, we can speak about the so many scholars have already stated, we can speak about “the difficult legacy of Brother Francis.”

Maria Pia Alberzoni (Università Cattolica S. Cuore, Milano) presented the theme *The “Franciscanism” of Lady Clare*. This expert scholar on Clare and the Second Order stated that Clare passed from being a *Madonna* (Lady) to a *Soror* (Sister). She lived for another 27 years after the death of St. Francis, and therefore she was a staunch defender of the ideals of the origins of the Franciscan family. She was very self-conscious regarding her identity as *plantula sancti Francisci* (the little plant of St. Francis). One of the problems that the Poor Ladies had to face was that of spiritual assistance on the part of the friars Minor. *Quo elongati* had greatly curtailed this possibility and had offered only a partial solution. How did the charism of the origins develop for the Poor Ladies after St. Francis? Was it a Franciscanism or a Minoritism? If Agostino Gemelli in 1932 spoke about Franciscanism, more recently Antonio Rigon spoke about Minoritism (*Minoritismo Padovano*). In other words, while in Umbria there was the self-awareness of the direct link with Francis and the first brothers, in other regions, such as the urban and university centres, another kind of Franciscan life developed, introducing rather the notion of Minoritism. This was a more fluid reality, which was not directly connected to St. Francis and his experience. In various regions outside Umbria, where San Damiano remained the beacon of faithfulness to the original ideals

of Franciscanism, another kind of female cloistered Franciscan life developed, namely that of the *Sorores Minores*. Examples include the monasteries of Verona, Trent, and Prague. These monasteries followed a *forma vitæ* which was presented as being that designed by Francis, but which, in reality was restructured by Cardinal Ugo of Ostia who obliged many monasteries to follow his own Rule. How did Clare auto-define herself? While Francis would prefer to call her and the sisters with the name *Dominæ* (Ladies), Clare preferred the name *Sorores* (Sisters). She called herself *Soror et ancilla* (Sister and servant) of the Poor Ladies.

Luciano Bertazzo OFMConv. (Centro Studi Antoniani, Padova) presented the theme *Brother Francis and Brother Anthony. Two Identities?* He began by showing how the liturgy itself makes a distinction between *pater Franciscus* (father Francis), and *Francisci patris æmulus* (rival of father Francis) in the case of Anthony of Padua. In this way we can see a kind of complementarity between the two saints, one who is the originator and father, the other who tries to be his rival in the positive way of expressing his charism in a more professional manner. This complementarity has been underlined by Antonio Rigon when he presents the *Legenda Rigaldina* by Eudes Rigaud, written around 1298-1317 and shows how there are many parallel approaches to the two saints. Thus, for example, Anthony’s sermon to the fish is a parallel narration to Francis’ sermon to the birds. We could speak about the memory of the father-founder versus the institutional metamorphosis of his ideal in later generations of friars. This metamorphosis was already in action during the lifetime of St. Anthony. Indeed, Fernando Martins from Portugal, the Canon Regular of St. Augustine, experienced such a metamorphosis when he decided to leave the royal monastery of Sant Cruz in Coimbra and join the friars Minor of

Olivais in 1220, attracted by the exemplary radicality of the Franciscan protomartyrs in Morocco. Francis had been drawn to a life of penance when he encountered the lepers. Fernando made the same experience when he encountered the friars and martyrs, prompting him to join the *pauperes fratres* as Brother Anthony and embark on their own experience of radicality unto martyrdom. Alas, it was not to be so for Anthony. However, the same happened to Francis, when he also wanted to go to the lands of the Saracens in order to suffer martyrdom. For both saints there was a new kind of martyrdom. The liturgy shows how Francis (*O martyr desiderio Francisce*) was gifted with the new kind of martyrdom in the stigmata he received on La Verna, whereas Anthony was gifted with the martyrdom of preaching. Hidden in the hermitage of Monte Paolo for some months, Anthony soon had to embark upon the *novitas* of his identity during the sermon he delivered, under obedience, in Forlì, leading him to become the first Franciscan lecturer in the university town of Bologna and, later on, in France and Padua. Bertazzo also underlined the complementary presentation of Francis and Anthony during the chapter of Arles, where Anthony was preaching on the title of the Cross and Francis appeared in the air with his arms outstretched, blessing the brothers with the sign of the Cross. Last, but not least, the impression that is normally given that there is practically very little Franciscan content in the *Sermones* of St. Anthony is far from being exact, since a close examination of the texts shows that the Evangelical Doctor assumed an exegetical approach to Scripture which is intrinsically imbued with Franciscan spirituality.

Jean-François Godet-Calogeras (St. Bonaventure University, NY) presented a paper entitled *The Institutional Mediation between Franciscanism and Minoritism*. In October 1216 Jacques de Vitry, bishop elect of Acre in the Holy Land, wrote a letter from Genoa, which is the oldest

document relating to Franciscanism. He describes the Franciscan fraternity for the first time, but he reads the Franciscan *forma vitae* as a copy of the form of life of the early Christian community of Jerusalem as described in the Acts of the Apostles. For Jacques the male and female fraternities he found in Umbria when he went to Perugia for his episcopal consecration, was a *religio*, that is, a religious Order. He speaks about the annual chapter, the itinerant nature of this way of life, and the fact that the brothers maintained good relations with the papacy. The development of this way of life continued in 1217, with the Pentecost chapter that sent the first brothers “beyond the mountains (in continental Europe)” and “beyond the sea” (in the eastern Mediterranean littoral). After the initial failures in Germany and Hungary, the Pentecost chapter of 1219 again sent other brothers outside Italy. Francis himself left to go to Syria and eventually to Damietta during the fifth Crusade. Jordan of Giano tells us that, during his absence, Francis left behind two vicars to lead the brothers, namely Brother Matteo da Narni and Brother Gregorio da Napoli. The outcome of this decision was a disaster for the Order. Jordan uses the terms which are ironically placed on the mouth of Francis and Peter Cattanio, after the report given to them by the lay brother who escaped from Italy to inform them of the disorders introduced by the vicars: “After Blessed Francis had read the constitutions and while he was at table where meat had been placed before him for him to eat, he said to Brother Peter: ‘My lord Peter, what shall we do?’ And Peter answered: ‘Ah, my lord Francis, whatever pleases you, for you have the *authority*.’ It was because Peter was educated and of noble birth that Blessed Francis, in his courtesy, honoring him, addressed him as lord.” The irony lies in the use of the terms *dominus* and *potestas*, which are obviously totally contrary to what Francis intended his brothers to live. When Francis returned to Italy in the spring of 1220 he took a bold decision to go to Pope Honorius III in

Viterbo or Orvieto, to request a Cardinal Protector in the person of Cardinal Ugo di Ostia, and he also renounced the government of the Order in favour of Peter Cattanio. Francis Ugo is a *dominus*, a lord who is called to correct the faults of the brothers. Although himself a servant of the brothers, Francis respects the Church in its jurisdictional authority. Indeed he needed such a protection from Pope Honorius III who, on 11th June 1219 published the Bulla *Cum dilecti filii*, and again republished it for the bishops of France on 29th May 1220 with the title *Pro dilectis*. On 22nd September 1220 the same Pope published *Cum secundum consilium*, instituting the year of novitiate in the Franciscan Order. The letter does not mention Francis, but speaks about “priors”, a term which would be more fitting for the Order of Preachers than for the friars Minor. The document is a proof of what Jacques de Vitry himself stated in a Letter written from Damietta in 1220, complaining about the lack of preparation of the friars Minor who did not go through a year of probation before being admitted for profession. All this shows how the Church gradually mediated in the institutionalisation of the friars Minor, even when Francis was still alive, and how, even though Francis himself did not want the brothers to ask for privileges from the Church of Rome, he had to accept that the Church would intervene in order to help the Order become a true religious family in the canonical sense of the term.

Andrea Bartocci (Università di Teramo) presented the theme *The Papal Declarations of the Rule of Minors from Gregory IX to Clement V*. He introduced his talk with a reference to the publication of the volume *Fonti normative Francescane*, by Edizioni Francescane (2016), which is a compendium of the early Franciscan legislation and of the papal interpretations on the Rule. He based his analysis principally upon chapters 4 and 6 of the *Regula Bullata*, speaking respectively of the prohibition to keep money and upon the

expropriation of the friars Minor. Taken together with Francis’ prohibition to the friars in the *Testament* regarding not making any recourse to the papal curia to ask for privileges, these elements can be taken as a faithful picture of the *intentio* of the founder. In spite of all this, in 1230 Gregory IX published *Quo elongati* (28th September) upon the request of the general chapter which sent a delegation to the pope. Some years later, on 14th November 1245, Innocent IV published another papal interpretation, *Ordinem vestrum*. These were only the beginning of a long process. In *Quo elongati* Gregory IX declared that the *Testament* was not binding in conscience and distinguished between *property* and *use* in the Rule. He declared that the friars were not holders of immovable property, which remained in the hands of their donors, but they had the right to make use of their means for self-support. In the case of Innocent IV the problem regarding property as distinct from use is even more underlined. In a time when the friars already lived in large conventual establishments and churches in the towns and cities, the pope stated that the immovable and mobile properties of the brothers were *ius et proprietatem beati Petri*, that is, property of the Holy See. Just two years later, during the heated controversy between the secular masters and the mendicant Orders in the University of Paris, *Quanto studiosus* instituted the procurators, who managed the property of the brothers under direct dependence of the Minister General. All this happened during a moment of contestation regarding the interpretation that the Franciscans were giving to the Rule. The thesis of the secular masters was that poverty is not a means of perfection and that Christian perfection is compatible with property, since the height of Christian perfection is not poverty but charity. This view is important, because it marks the real reason underlying the controversy between seculars and mendicants in Paris and, later on, between the Franciscan Order and Pope John XXII.

On 14th August 1279 Pope Nicholas III published *Exiit qui seminat*, a long commentary and interpretation on the Rule. It was this pope who introduced the notion of *usus pauper* (poor use) in order to characterise the way in which Franciscans could make use of useful things while remaining faithful to their vow of poverty. The document was written at a time when the poverty controversy was far from over. Indeed, in the same year we find St. Bonaventure composing the treatise *Apologia pauperum*. The trend at this moment was that of making a legal and formal distinction between property, possession, usufruct and poor or simple use. We know that, after the Council of Lyons in 1274 the debate between the Community and Spirituals in the Order flared up, and it was centred upon this notion of *usus pauper*, particularly with the interpretation given by Pierre Jean Olieu. The last papal declaration on the Rule was *Exivi de paradiso* of Clement V, on 6th May 1312. At this point the Order was going through one of its toughest moments of crisis regarding its faithfulness to the Rule. The controversy between the Community and Spirituals was soon to develop into a far more serious conflict between the Order itself and Pope John XXII, especially after the condemnation of the Spirituals in 1317.

William O. Duba (University of Fribourg) presented the theme *The theological and philosophical speculation as an element of identity*. His lecture was based upon analyses of various original documentary sources in the Vatican archives relating to the Franciscans and the study of theology and philosophy in view of preaching and teaching, which seen within the context of the Order's internal conflict with its own identity during the crisis between Community and Spirituals, brought a good number of brothers to be examined regarding the doctrines they were propagating. Besides the well-known figures of Pierre Jean Olieu and Ubertino da Casale, Duba dwelt on other less-known

but important figures. His lecture was based upon textual analysis of projected documents, which it is difficult to describe without reference to the content of his notes.

Caroline Bruzelius (Duke University, Durham) presented the theme *From the existential precariousness to the minoritic stability: the material identity*. Franciscanism is a social movement that was born as an anti-cultural reality, impregnated with precariousness. This seemingly strange and controversial affirmation has then been explained. Indeed, Franciscanism underwent a transformation from a fraternity without a roof on its head to one living in large conventual establishments. This phenomenon left it with profound internal wounds. The *conventus* is a formalised institution aimed at institutional identity. This is evident in architecture, paintings, etc. The problem regarded permanent establishments and poverty. The clerical and institutional change was reflected also in the field of architecture. The Order began to distinguish between *eremus*, *locus*, *domus*. The material culture of the friars Minor is reflected in these types of buildings. Unfortunately not much is known, since the underlying archaeological remains of the ancient hermitages and conventual establishments have not yet been sufficiently discovered and studied. It is evident that there was a striding difference between the large conventual establishments in urban areas, which became centres of study, centres for the custodies, provinces, centres for the inquisition, and the small friaries. The friars Minor soon acquired a capillary presence, a kind of *ubiquitas*. In other words, they were very much visible everywhere. The friars lived in the cities, the open spaces and the market places. Franciscan architecture needs to be studied also in comparison with the architecture of other mendicant Orders, like the Dominicans and the Augustinians. The Franciscans expressed a plurality of

ideologies and presences in contrast with monastic life. What kind of relationship can one find between the Portiuncula and Santa Croce in Florence? Was it just a passage from a poor presence to an influential conventual presence in a city of art and learning, or was it something more? The beginnings of Franciscan architecture are linked with the restoration of pre-existing buildings. Examples include San Damiano and the Portiuncula. Some Franciscan buildings were constructed on other older structures, such as the case of Sancta Maria in Aracœli in Rome, which was previously a Benedictine establishment. Another important factor is the fact that lay faithful wanted to have family chapels and tombs in the conventual churches of the friars. The excavations conducted in Santa Croce in Florence after the floods of 1966 show that there were buildings beneath the foundations of the cloister, which is dated 1252. The friars had arrived in Florence already in 1209. In other words, we can speak about the conventualisation of the first Franciscan establishments, and also of the monasticisation of the conventual establishments. Churches were constructed in successive phases. The first part of the church was normally the choir where the friars chanted the divine office, at the far end of the central nave of the church, normally with a flat back wall. Typical examples are Santa Croce in Florence and San Francesco in Bologna. The building of conventual churches with just one central nave ending without an apse is a sign of the austerity of the conventual structures of the Franciscans, maybe also influenced by the Vallambrosian and Camaldolese structures. These buildings were a sign of the long way the Order had come from the initial precarious existence to minoritic stability, with the practical aim of having urban architectonic establishments ideal for studies and preaching.

Paolo Evangelisti (Archivio Storico Camera Deputati Roma) presented the paper entitled «*Vilitas attenditur in pretio*

pariter et colore». The esteem of value as a «*habitus*» of the Minors. This expression refers to what Bonaventure says in the Constitutions of Narbonne (1260) regarding the habit that the friars Minor should wear. The *Expositio Regulæ quatuor Magistri* has spoken of Franciscan poverty as a voluntary poverty, “the kind of poverty which is proper to us.” The pre-Narbonne constitutions, going back to 1239, also spoke of this regime of poverty and the use of money while commenting what the *Regula Bullata* states. We should remember that the term “money,” which translates the Latin word *pecunia*, does not refer only to money as we understand it today. *Pecuniam esse quidquid accipitur aut vendatur* (Money is whatever is accepted or sold). In other words, it includes all kinds of offerings made to the friars, whether in money or in kind. The Narbonne Constitutions of 1260 established a kind of qualified poverty which had to be maintained and verified. It was poverty that had to be lived in practice. That is why Bonaventure gave so much importance to the *usus pauper* of whatever the friars could handle. The Constitutions were so meticulous that they even arrived at establishing the *vilitas* regarding the *pretio et colore* of the habits of the friars. In other words, they legislated the quality of the fabric and colour of the habits. It was this trend that opened the way for a dialectic between lived poverty and idealised poverty, which led the Order to the poverty crisis that would characterise not its concrete way of living poverty as Francis envisaged it, but rather the way in which friars were discussing poverty as an issue, an ideal. One can speak about the ideology of poverty.

Michele Pellegrini (Università di Siena) presented his analysis of the theme *Local identity of the Minors*. He referred to the well-known texts in the *De inceptione* and *Legenda trium sociorum*, regarding the friars describing themselves as *virii pœnitentiales de civitate Assisii oriundi*

(men of penance coming from the town of Assisi). He also reminds us of what the same sources state regarding the fact that the *religio* of the friars Minor was not yet recognised as an *ordo*. These texts are fundamental in order to delve into the self-consciousness of the friars Minor of the first generation regarding their identity. They saw themselves, first and foremost, as men belonging to the town of Assisi. In other words we can speak about an “Umbrian minoritism.” This was soon to become distinct from the other kind of minoritism known as the “Paduan minoritism,” whose major exponent was Anthony of Padua. This minoritism signed the metamorphosis of the identity of Francis. The friars had the self-consciousness of being *cives*, citizens, and they saw as their *raison d’être* of their lives as persons who lived for an aim and with a common interest. The medieval mendicant orders were essentially an urban phenomenon, in contrast to the monastic orders which were rural and feudal in their nature. The brothers felt that they belonged to their Order but also to the civil world in which they lived. We find many of these relations between friars and secular authorities and economic activities in the towns in such documents such as the *Chronicle* of Salimbene de Adam of Parma. One can speak of four kinds of self-consciousness on the part of the friars, namely (1) self-consciousness of the relation between minoritism and urban presence; (2) the choice of the Order to go beyond the urban setting in order to spread out to a more regional dimension; (3) inter-provincial itineracy, especially the result of friars going to the centres of studies in the Order; (4) the acceptance of a praxis of insertion of the Order in the local social framework.

Felice Accrocca, Archbishop of Benevento (Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, Roma) presented the paper «*Vocentur fratres minores*». *The constant conflictuality of identity*. Accrocca delivered a lively and highly professional lecture in his typical clear and down-to-earth style. He stated that conflictuality regarding identity has always been written in the DNA of the Friars Minor.

Indeed, as some historians have pointed out, we can speak about the difficult legacy that Francis left to his brothers. This difficulty was highly evident in their struggle to comprehend Francis’ intentions in his *Testament*. When one looks at the first century of Franciscan history, one can state that the year 1274 marks a threshold. That was the year of the Second Council of Lyons, in which there was a real danger that mendicant orders would be axed. The Preachers and the Minors were saved because of their evident “usefulness” to the Church.

Tensions in the Order, however, were already evident before Francis died in 1226. When going through Bologna in 1220 Francis evicted the brothers from the house they lived in, and was only dissuaded from insisting that they move out when told that the house belonged to the Commune and not to the brothers. However, after just 2 years we find Anthony of Lisbon, who became a friar Minor, teaching theology to the brothers in Bologna. Sabatier had presented Thomas of Celano as being accommodating with the wishes of the brothers, and thus an “official” biographer in the service of the institution. But further studies have shown that Celano was, indeed, strict with the brothers in the sense that he still did not agree with their pretensions. It is enough to read the concluding lines of the *Tractatus de miraculis* to understand this.

Being an expert in Franciscan sources, Accrocca came out with various audacious and well-proved assertions. Giovanni da Perugia, author of *De inceptione* (*Anonymous of Perugia*) ends up by agreeing with what Bonaventure would affirm in the *Epistula de tribus quaestionibus*. According to Accrocca *De inceptione* was written before 1241, and reflects tensions which were already present in the Order during the time of Elias’ generalate. This is a new version of events. In the years 1232-1239 there was a sense of irritation among the brothers in northern Europe in the face of the “Italian” style of government of Elias. This tension would only grow in the decade following, even after the deposition of Elias and the traumatic 1239 chapter. Between 1239 and 1241 Gregory IX intervened in order to gloss over the Rule.

The operative decisions of the new hierarchies of the Order, particularly from Haymo onwards, did not encounter much agreement among the brothers. Hugo of Digne went to Umbria in order to meet the companions of Francis who were still alive. The chapter of 1244 again insists that the companions hand over their memoirs of Francis and the early fraternity. The reason was because many friars were regarding the *Vita beati Francisci* of 1228 as incomplete. What was truly happening was a kind of struggle in order to get together the hierarchic institution of the Order, from the times of Giovanni da Parma (1247-1257), the companions of the saint and Thomas of Celano as biographer. Indeed this effort worked out, as we know, in the *Memoriale in desiderio animæ* and later on in the *Tractatus de miraculis*. However, the underlying tensions were still evident. Angelo Clareno, half a century later, would place on the lips of brother Giles the famous words: *Bene et opportune venisti, sed tardi venisti* (It is good and opportune that you have come, but you have come too late), uttered in front of Giovanni da Parma who was newly elected as minister general. One should also remember that this turn of events in 1247 was influenced by *Ordinem vestrum* of Pope Innocent IV, which generated great tension in the Order regarding the notion of poverty, use, dominion and property on the part of the friars. It is evident that Celano was preoccupied with the degenerating trend in the life-style of the brothers, and this is well expressed in the *Memoriale*.

During the same years we meet the pastoral competition between the friars and the secular clergy. The friars would consider themselves as poor and therefore as perfect observers of the Gospel. It is in this tense environment that one can place the composition of the *Sacrum commercium*. The Franciscan doctor Jean de la Rochelle, in a sermon on St. Anthony, had the courage to state that the poverty of the Minors was different from that of the other Orders and even from the poverty of the Preachers.

Even Thomas' *Memoriale* did not meet universal approval by the brothers, who were still clamouring to have a separate treatise on

the miracles of St. Francis. Thomas had to succumb to the pressures of the brothers, but the conclusion of his *Tractatus* is a splendid example of just how frustrated he was when hard-pressed by the brothers to dance to their tune in his biographical accounts of St. Francis. The *Tractatus* was published in the chapter of Metz in 1254, which was the same chapter that suspended the provisions of *Ordinem vestrum*, and did so in the face of the conflict that was brewing in Paris between the mendicants and the secular masters. This decision was serious. Accrocca describes it as the Order's attempt to discredit the Pope. He even goes further and shows how the Order was angry at Innocent IV's promulgation of *Etsi animarum* (21 November 1254), which was a kind of triumph for the seculars, and a concession of Innocent who was now a frail man on the point of death. The total abrogation of this document by Alexander IV was a sign that the Pope wanted to give privileges to the Order. At the same time, the conflict with the seculars was also being overshadowed by stiff competition between the two mendicant Orders, in such a way that the respective superiors, Giovanni da Parma for the Minors and Hubert de Romans for the Preachers, had to write a joint encyclical letter asking for more collaboration in the face of the external danger that the mendicants were encountering.

In front of these challenges Bonaventure, successor to Giovanni da Parma had to react. Angelo Clareno states how Bonaventure had to bring his predecessor to trial in Città della Pieve. This fact is not an exaggeration on the part of Clareno, since the danger of spiritualism in the Order was very real. Indeed, the encyclical letter that Bonaventure wrote to all the brothers on 23rd April 1257 is proof of the deep divisions within the Order. Bonaventure became an architect of the hagiographic edifice regarding St. Francis. He reorganised the entire hagiographic structure of Celano in order to address the new problems of the Order. On their part the Spirituals attacked Bonaventure for elements they considered deleted from the hagiographic tradition. Their attitude is best seen in the account of the chalice that Bonaventure drinks partly and then pours

away, which Clareno narrates in the *Historia septem tribulationum*. Indeed, the Leonine texts inserted after the death of Bonaventure, are witness to the harshness of this tension. At that moment, some 40 years after the death of Francis, the past was not so evidently clear. The result was that a new form of self-defence of the origins begins to emerge.

It was in this context that we assist at the *inventio* of the Portiuncula Indulgence placing the church of St. Mary of the Angels as the true *caput et mater* of the Order, in opposition to the Basilica of St. Francis. The declaration of the Second Council of Lyons in 1274 regarding the usefulness of the Orders of Preachers and Minors among all the other mendicant orders, gave birth to a new situation in which the end of external attacks against the very existence of the Minors gave way to new internal tensions.

Peter John Olieu enters the picture at this point with his doctrine on the *usus pauper* around 1279-1283. The internal conflictuality of the Order became very strong towards the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th centuries. At this moment the figure of Brother Leo comes to the forefront as the one who had defended the words and actions of the founder, which the Spirituals were bent on keeping alive as a tradition. This period was dominated by the figures of Ubertino da Casale and Angelo Clareno. While Ubertino was more involved in the external tension of the Order with the outside world, including the Avignon papacy of John XXII, Clareno concentrated his efforts of protest at the eremitic expression of the Franciscan life within the fold of the Poor Hermits founded by Pope Celestine V. Although condemned by John XXII Clareno still tried to have his reform reconfirmed and reactivated, until in 1318 he had to take refuge in Subiaco where he composed his *Chronicon seu Historia septem tribulationum Ordinis Minorum*. In this voluminous treatise Clareno reads the history of the Order as a story of continual betrayals of the intentions of the founder.

Indeed, the works of the Spirituals did not die with their condemnation, but remained popular and alive in the ranks of the

successive reforms of the Order, particularly that of the early Observants in Italy and in the Capuchin reform. No wonder that Ubertino lies at the basis of many writings of Bernardine of Siena, and even of the Capuchin Bernardine Ochino. According to the thesis of Paul Sabatier, the Franciscans are the disciples of a defeated man, namely of Clareno and his vision of the history of the Order in the *Historia septem tribulationum*. Although we cannot accept this vision of events without strong reservations, it is evident that the evangelical tension that from the person of Francis has invested the life of the brothers in the Church and in society, has remained very much alive.

The last talk was that by Patrick Nold (University at Albany NY), *The identity that was refused: John XXII and the Order of Minors*. This lecture concerned the complicated chapter of the history of the Order during the pontificate of John XXII (1316-1334). John had studied Thomas Aquinas and shared his view that the special vow for religious was not poverty but rather obedience. John XXII noted this and often referred to it, particularly in the *Quorundam exigit*. His issue with the Franciscans who were handed over for trial was based upon the doctrine of the absolute poverty of Jesus and the Apostles which the Order was upholding. John was adamant that evangelical perfection lay in charity and not poverty. He even arrived at labelling as heretical the Order in this doctrinal position, particularly in the identification of the Franciscan life with the Gospel. This was the basis of the handing over of the rebel brothers to the Inquisition, of their condemnation and also of the Pope's long and bitter dispute with Michele da Cesena and the leading members of the Order. One could speak of a refusal of the very identity and self awareness of the friars Minor by a Pope who wanted the Order to embark upon a new vision of its own existence and mission. Whether John XXII or the Spirituals or the *Fratelli de opinione* won the day is a question of debate. The rest is known history.

«FRANCISCE, UNA DE MICIS OMNIBUS HOSTIAM FACITO» BONAVENTURE'S VIEW OF FRANCIS' ROLE IN THE *REGULA BULLATA*

Noel Muscat OFM

Bonaventure composed the *Legenda Maior Sancti Francisci* according to a plan. After the prologue, in which Francis is presented in a prophetic light as the angel of the sixth seal wearing the penitential habit in the form of a cross, Bonaventure dedicates four chapters to the historical narration of some events of the life of Francis, before passing on to the main section of the *Legenda* in chapters 5 to 13, which speak about Francis as a *vir hierarchicus* who embodied the virtues in a triple way of purification, illumination and mystical union, culminating in the event of the stigmatisation. Chapters 14 and 15 deal with the *transitus* and canonisation and translation of the relics of Saint Francis.¹

At the very end of the first part, namely in paragraph 11 of chapter 4, Bonaventure mentions the events related to the composition and confirmation of the *Regula bullata*: “When the Order was already widely spread and Francis was considering having the rule which had been approved by Innocent permanently confirmed by his successor Honorius, he was advised by the following revelation from God.

It seemed to him that he was gathering tiny bread crumbs from the ground, which he had to distribute to a crowd of hungry brothers who stood all around him. He was afraid to give out such little crumbs, fearing that such minute particles might slip between his fingers, when a voice said to him from above: ‘Francis, make one host out of all the crumbs, and give it to those who want to eat.’ He did it, whoever did not receive it devoutly, or showed contempt for

the gift received, soon appeared obviously covered with leprosy [...].

On the following day, when he kept vigil in prayer, he heard this voice coming down from heaven: ‘Francis, the crumbs of last night are the words of the Gospel; the host is the rule and the leprosy is wickedness.’

Since he therefore wanted the Rule that had been taken from a more widespread collection of Gospel passages to be confirmed, he went up to a certain mountain led by the Holy Spirit, with two of his companions, to condense it into a shorter form as the vision had dictated. There he fasted, content with only bread and water, and dictated the rule as the Holy Spirit suggested to him while he was praying. When he came down from the mountain, he gave the rule to his vicar to keep. After a few days had elapsed, the vicar claimed that it had been lost through carelessness. The holy man went off again to the place of solitude and rewrote it just as before, as if he were taking the words from the mouth of God. And he obtained confirmation for it, as he had desired, from the lord Pope Honorius, in the eighth year of his pontificate.

Fervently exhorting the brothers to observe this rule, Francis used to say that nothing of what he had placed there came from his own efforts but that he dictated everything just as it had been revealed by God. To confirm this with greater certainty by God’s own testimony, when only a few days had passed the stigmata of our Lord Jesus Christ were imprinted upon him by the finger of the living God, as the seal of the Supreme Pontiff, Christ, for the complete

¹ R.J. ARMSTRONG, *The Spiritual Theology of the Legenda Major of Saint Bonaventure*, Ph.D. Thesis, Fordham University, New York 1978.

confirmation of the rule and the commendation of its author, as will be described below, after our exposition of his virtues.”²

Bonaventure’s account of the composition of the *Regula bullata*

The history of the Franciscan Order during the first half of the 13th century was already indicative of the nature of the interpretation of Francis’ intentions on the part of the brothers. When Bonaventure wrote the *Legenda Maior* in 1260-1263, he not only made use of the hagiographical and biographical material documented by Thomas of Celano in the *Memoriale in desiderio animæ*, which had also formed the basis of the testimonies of companions of the Saint in the *De inceptione* and the *Legenda trium sociorum*. Bonaventure was also writing the life of St. Francis, keeping in mind the legislation of the Order that had developed ever since the time of Elias in 1239, and which he aptly gathered in the *Constitutions of Narbonne* of 1260. Regarding

the question of the *Regula bullata*, Bonaventure certainly kept in mind two papal declarations on the Rule, namely Gregory IX’s *Quo elongati* (28th September 1230)³ and Innocent IV’s *Ordinem vestrum* (14th November 1245). Another important commentary on the Rule was the so-called *Commentary on the Rule by the Four Masters*, presented to the chapter of Bologna in 1242 by Godfrey, custos of Paris, Alexander of Hales, Jean de La Rochelle, Robert de La Bassée and Rigaud, during the time when Haymo of Faversham was minister general.⁴

In other words, by the time Bonaventure was composing the *Legenda Maior*, the Order had already developed a strong tradition regarding *glossæ*, or explanatory notes, on the Franciscan Rule. Coupled with Bonaventure’s role as minister general at the helm of an Order that was already hotly debating its faithfulness to the original intentions of St. Francis, Bonaventure necessarily had to portray the legislative text of the *Regula bullata* in such a way as to present it as the document that should

² S. BONAVENTURA, *Legenda Maior Sancti Francisci*, IV,11 (FAED II, 558-559). Latin text in *Fontes Franciscani*, edited by E. MENESTÒ et alii, Edizioni Porziuncola, Assisi 1995, 812-813: Cum autem, dilatato iam Ordine, vivendi formam per dominum Innocentium approbatam disponeret per successorem ipsius Honorium in perpetuum facere roborari, huiusmodi fuit a Deo revelatione commonitus. Videbatur quidem sibi de terra micarum subtilissimas collegisse multisque famelicis fratribus ipsum circumstantibus debere tribuere. Cumque micarum tam tenues distribuere formidaret, ne forte inter manus exciderent, vox ei desuper ait: «Francisce, unam de micis omnibus hostium facito et manducare volentibus tribue». Quo id agente, quicumque illud non devote recipiebant, aut receptum contemnebant donum, mox lepra infecti notabiles apparebant. Recitat mane vir sanctus haec omnia sociis, dolens, se non percipere mysterium visionis. Sequenti vero die, cum vigil in oratione persisteret, huiusmodi vocem de caelo delapsam audivit: «Francisce, micarum praeteritae noctis verba evangelica sunt, hostia regula, lepra iniquitas». Volens igitur confirmandam Regulam ex verborum Evangelii aggregatione profusius traditam ad compendiosorem formam, iuxta quod dictabat visio monstrata, redigere, in montem quemdam cum duobus sociis, Spiritu sancto ducente, conscendit, ubi pane tantum contentus et aqua, ieiunans, conscribere eam fecit, secundum quod oranti sibi divinus Spiritus suggererat. Quam cum, de monte

descendens, servandam, suo vicario commisisset, et ille, paucis elapsis diebus, assereret per incuriam perditam, iterato sanctus vir ad locum solitudinis rediit eamque instar prioris, ac si ex ore Dei verba susciperet, illico reparavit et per supradictum dominum Papam Honorium, octavo pontificatus illius anno, sicut optaverat, obtinuit confirmari. Ad cuius observantiam fratres ferventer inducens, dicebat, se nihil ibi posuisse secundum industriam propriam, sed omnia sic scribi fecisse, sicut sibi fuerat divinitus revelata. Quod ut certius constaret testimonio Dei, paucis admodum evolutis diebus, impressa sunt ei stigmata Domini Iesu digito Dei vivi tamquam bulla summi Pontificis Christi ad confirmationem omnimodam regulae et commendationem auctoris, sicut post suarum enarrationem virtutum suo loco inferius describetur.

³ F. ACCROCCA, “*Sancta plantatio fratrum Minorum Ordinis*”, in *Gregorio IX e gli Ordini Mendicanti*. Atti del XXXVIII Convegno della Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani (Assisi, 7-9 ottobre 2010), Spoleto 2011, 195-258.

⁴ *Commento alla Regola dei Quattro Maestri*. Introduzione, traduzione e note di L. MARCELLI, in *Fonti Normative Francescane*, a cura di R. LAMBERTINI, Editrici Francescane, Padova 2016, 119-227. D. FLOOD, *Three Commentaries on the Rule*, in *La Regola dei Frati Minori*. Atti del XXXVII Convegno della Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani (Assisi, 8-10 ottobre 2009), Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, Spoleto 2010, 153-185.

unify all brothers in their endeavour to follow Francis and his Gospel way of life.

It is within this historical context that we have to analyse the text referring to the *Regula bullata* in the *Legenda Maior*. The dream regarding the bread crumbs that Francis in vain tried to distribute to the brothers until he made a host of all the crumbs is unique to Bonaventure's *Legenda*, although the tension of the brothers regarding the formation of the new Rule with the intervention of brother Elias can also be found in the sources coming from the pen of the companions of the Saint.⁵ Bonaventure refers to the *vivendi formam per dominum Innocentium approbatam*. He does not speak about a *regula*, a rule, but about a form of life. Although in practice the two terms refer to the same thing, technically speaking there is a difference between a *forma vitae* and a *regula*, since a form of life does not necessarily imply an official document which receives confirmation from the Holy See. In fact, when Francis went to Pope Innocent III in 1209 he presented him with a form of life which, according to Celano, was just a collage of Gospel passages and not a juridical document:

“When blessed Francis saw that the Lord God was daily increasing their numbers, he wrote for himself and for his brothers present and future, simply and in a few words, a form of life and a rule. He used primarily words of the holy Gospel, longing only for its perfection. He inserted a few other things necessary for the practice of a holy way of life.”⁶

Innocent III had *orally approved* this way of life, and there is no papal document that confirms it. What does Bonaventure mean when he states that Innocent III had approved a form of life for Francis? Given that in 1209 Innocent III did, in fact, approve a form of life, but only in an oral and unofficial way, could it be that there might have been another more

formal approval of this same form of life which, from 1209 to 1221, continued to be developed and perfected, as a result of the Fourth Lateran Council, papal letters to the Order, and the growth of the same Order, leading eventually to the approval of the *Regula non bullata* by the Pentecost Chapter of 1221?

Carlo Paolazzi was of the opinion that the opening words of the *Regula non bullata* can shed light on this issue.⁷ The prologue of the 1221 Rule states: “This is the life of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that Brother Francis petitioned the Lord Pope to grant and confirm for him; and he did grant and confirm it for him and his brothers present and to come. Brother Francis – and whoever is head of this religion – promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Innocent and his successors.”⁸ According to Paolazzi this clause must have been inserted in the primitive form of life before the death of Innocent III on 16th July 1216, since obedience is only promised to living persons not to the dead. Another proof that there was a gradual progress of legislation leading up to the *Regula non bullata* is given in the *Letter written from Genoa* by Jacques de Viry in October 1216, where the bishop-elect of Acre states:

“With great profit, the brothers of this Order assemble once a year in a designated place to rejoice in the Lord and eat together; with the advice of good men they draw up and promulgate holy laws and have them confirmed by the Lord Pope.”⁹

All this goes to prove that, although we do not know of any official written approval of the primitive form of life, and not even of the *Regula non bullata*, it is highly probable that Francis would have submitted to Pope Innocent any amendments or additions to the original text of the *propositum vitae*, particularly during the general chapters and especially in the time immediately following the Fourth Lateran Council. The same procedure would have been

⁵ AC 17 (FAED II, 131-132); SPMaj 1 (FAED III, 253-254).

⁶ 1C 32 (FAED I, 210). Latin text in *Fontes Franciscani*, 305: Videns beatus Franciscus quod Dominus Deus quotidie augeter numerum in idipsum scripsit sibi et fratribus suis, habitis et futuris, simpliciter et paucis verbis, vitae formam et regulam, sancti Evangelii praecipue sermonibus utens, ad cuius perfectionem solummodo inhiabat. Pauca tamen alia inseruit, quae omnino ad conversationis sanctae usum necessario imminebant.

⁷ C. PAOLAZZI, *Le Regole: aspetti di novità redazionali*, in *La Regola dei Frati Minori*, 67-68.

⁸ *RegNB Prol.* (FAED I, 63).

⁹ JACQUES DE VITRY, *Letter written from Genoa* (1216), (FAED I, 580). Latin text in *Lettres de Jacques de Vitry (1160/1170-1240), évêque de Saint-Jean-d'Acre*, éd. critique par R.B.C. HUYGENS, Leiden 1960, 76: consilio bonorum virorum suas faciant et promulgant institutiones sanctas et a domno papa confirmatas.

followed with Honorius III, particularly after the papal letters regulating the status of the friars Minor (*Cum dilecti* 1219 and *Cum dilectis* 1220) and the year of novitiate (*Cum secundum consilium* 1222).

Bonaventure had to keep all this in mind when he wrote that Francis had this dream regarding the bread crumbs with which he had to feed the hungry friars. Francis was trying to organise his religious family in such a way as to make it more coherent to its status as a religious Order with a Rule that had to be confirmed by the Pope. Personally he did not feel very capable of doing so, and that is why he felt so anguished during his dream. He needed help. We have already spoken of the expert help that Francis found in the persons of brothers Leo and Bonizo da Bologna, as well as in Cardinal Ugo who was an expert canon lawyer. But Bonaventure is not interested in this detail as much as he is interested in the role of Jesus Christ himself in the composition of the *Regula bullata*. That is why Bonaventure speaks of Francis who is instructed by Christ to make a host out of the crumbs in order to feed the brothers with a wholesome meal which was the Rule. In other words, Bonaventure seems to lean towards the interpretation of those brothers who considered the Rule as the direct product of Christ's own inspiration to Francis. The aim of Bonaventure, therefore, is to underline Francis' primary role in the writing of the *Regula bullata*, irrespective of his human capabilities and of the need to make recourse to experts. Bonaventure falls short of the Spiritualistic interpretation of the Rule standing on the same level as the Gospel, but he is convinced that the observance of the Rule implies the observance of the way of life of the Gospel.

The reaction of the brothers in the dream is also interesting. Whereas a good number of the brothers ate the host with devotion and observed the Rule faithfully, others did not want to accept Francis' food and they became lepers. We have already stated that the later sources would speak about the learned brothers and ministers who approached Francis, under the direction of Brother Elias, telling him that they had no intention of observing the Rule. Bonaventure does not speak about this fact, but rather about Elias who carelessly misplaces the text of the Rule, prompting Francis to go back

to re-write the whole text faithfully. What is clearly evident in all these episodes, as well as in the other episode regarding the brothers who wanted Cardinal Ugo to convince Francis to choose one of the approved Rules,¹⁰ is that the composition of the *Regula bullata* was made in an atmosphere of tension and apprehension, and that there were brothers who rejected it outright (the ones who became "lepers"). Christ's expression: *Francisce, micae praeteritae noetis verba evangelica sunt, hostia regula, lepra iniquitas*, is quite eloquent, since it makes a distinction between the crumbs (the various legislative texts added to the primitive *forma vitae*, which were not conducive to the Order's cohesion), the host (the composition of the *Regula bullata*), and the leper brothers who became symbols of *iniquitas*, that is, evil. One could speak of Bonaventure making a spiritual interpretation of the whole episode of the composition of the *Regula bullata*.

"Since he therefore wanted the Rule that had been taken from a more widespread collection of Gospel passages to be confirmed, he went up to a certain mountain led by the Holy Spirit, with two of his companions, to condense it into a shorter form as the vision had dictated." Bonaventure shows how Francis had a text that he could work upon and which had already been experienced by the Order. This was the *Regula non bullata*, which is indeed made up of a widespread collection of Gospel passages. Francis wanted this way of life to be *confirmed* by Pope Honorius, but he knew that he had to find a way to create one host out of all the crumbs of Gospel passages that made up the structure of the Rule of 1221. The composition of the *Regula bullata* is interpreted as a "condensed and shorter form" of the former text, but which corresponded to what Francis had been instructed in the vision, namely to make one host out of the many crumbs of bread.

The event of Elias who lost the Rule through negligence

Bonaventure presents a curious episode regarding the writing of the *Regula bullata*. Since Bonaventure is not interested only in the historical value of events, but rather in their biblical and symbolic nature, it is evident that the episode of Francis going up a mountain to write the Rule, and then having to return to

¹⁰ AC 18 (FAED II, 132-133).

repeat the same process all over again after Elias, his vicar, “lost” the first draft through negligence, is reminiscent of Moses the legislator who receives the tablets of the Law on Mount Sinai and returns to receive them once more after he broke them at the sight of the idolatry of the people of Israel.¹¹ In other words, it is fairly easy to state that the story regarding Elias and his negligence in misplacing the Rule is a kind of literary technique that Bonaventure uses in order to compare Francis to a new Moses.

The episode, however, cannot be explained simply as a literary “hagiographic creation” by Bonaventure. We have to try to understand the historical truth behind this episode. First of all, Bonaventure places the episode as a natural consequence of the vision of the bread crumbs which Francis forms into a host, namely, the need to create a more coherent Rule from the numerous Gospel passages present in the *Regula non bullata*. Then, Bonaventure presents the physical environment in which the Rule was written. Francis goes up a mountain with two brothers, which the *Speculum Perfectionis* indicates as Leo and Bonizo da Bologna. There Francis fasts, just like Moses did on Mount Sinai, and wrote the Rule under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He goes down from the mountain and entrusts the Rule in the hands of his Vicar, Brother Elias (who is not named by Bonaventure). After a few days Elias states that he lost the Rule through negligence (*per incuriam*). The saint therefore goes back up on the mountain and writes the Rule exactly as before, as if it were coming out of God’s mouth. Then he went to Pope Honorius III, who confirmed the Rule during the eighth year of his pontificate (1223).

Why would Elias be so negligent as to misplace such an important document as the Rule? It is evident that something was brewing among the brothers, and that Elias was compelled to act diplomatically, but to no avail. Bonaventure seems to imply that Elias gave in to the pressure of some brothers. We know, from the accounts in the *Compilatio Assisiensis* and *Speculum Perfectionis*, that it was the *plures ministri*, the many ministers, who went to Elias clamouring that Francis was writing a Rule which would be too rigid to observe. Elias

was afraid to go to say this to Francis, and that is why he demands that the ministers go with him. Bonaventure does not refer to this episode, but places the responsibility squarely upon the shoulders of Brother Elias. A close examination of the sources shows that, although Elias was the Vicar, and although it might have been more convenient for Bonaventure to place the responsibility upon the shoulders of a Vicar who had been estranged from the Order after 1239, and only reconciled to it some days before he died on 22nd April 1253, the true story was that Elias did not act alone. The presence of the ministers in later sources might be closer to the truth. Bonaventure is writing as a minister general, and his aim is that of pacifying a rather turbulent Order. To place the whole issue of the Rule as being questioned by the ministers when Francis was still alive would prove to create an embarrassing situation in which the heated debate regarding faithfulness to the *intentio* of the founder would flare up.

On the one hand Bonaventure seems to be close to the Spiritual interpretation that the Rule was dictated by Christ, and therefore was untouchable. At least Bonaventure states that it was written under the inspiration of the Spirit and coming forth from the mouth of God. On the other hand, Bonaventure stops short of the interpretation regarding the Rule standing on an equal footing with the Gospel. He simply states that the Rule was presented to Pope Honorius, in spite of Elias negligence (or rather, in spite of the ministers who wanted to block his plan), and that the Pope confirmed it. But even the Pope’s confirmation was not the last word. Bonaventure comes out with a very audacious interpretation of the confirmation of the Rule. Bonaventure states that Francis induced the brothers to observe the Rule since it had been divinely revealed. The proof for this lay in the fact that, “after a few days”, (in reality after roughly nine and a half months, from 29th November 1223 to 14th September 1224), Christ, the Supreme Pontiff, presented the *Bulla* of confirmation of the Rule with the seal of the stigmata of His Passion impressed on the body of Saint Francis on Mount La Verna.

One could state that, for Bonaventure, Francis remains the true author of the *Regula bullata*, which is a compendium of the *Regula*

¹¹ M. CONTI, *Sinai - Fonte Colombo: il peso di una analogia nell’interpretazione della Regola francescana*, in *Antoniano* 53 (1978) 23-55.

non bullata, just like a host is the gathering together of many crumbs of bread. Although Bonaventure does not rule out the intervention of expert persons who helped Francis to compose the Rule, he insists upon the spiritual and mystical atmosphere in which the Rule was composed, namely upon a mountain and during a period of fasting and prayer.

According to Daniele Solvi, Bonaventure speaks about the *Regula bullata* as being built upon three foundations, namely, the approval of the Popes, the evangelical nature of the same Rule, and the proofs of divine approval through the visible sign of the stigmata. In the turbulent period in which Bonaventure composed the *Legenda Maior*, during the conflict between the mendicants and seculars in Paris, and after *Etsi animarum* of Pope Innocent IV which, for a short period, abolished the privileges enjoyed by the Order of Minors, Bonaventure speaks of Francis who writes the *Regula bullata* as the apex of a legislative and spiritual journey which was always one and the same, based upon the foundation of the Gospel.¹²

Bonaventure therefore places Francis as the direct author of the *Regula bullata*, which was revealed to him by Christ through the action of the Spirit, and which cannot be taken as a document that abrogates what the *Regula non bullata* had tried to build when it was presented as the end product of the long journey of self-awareness of the Order ever since 1209, and as a compendium of bread crumbs from the Gospel. These bread crumbs, according to Bonaventure, were gathered to form one host, which would give nourishment to the brothers who would observe the Rule, confirmed not only by the highest authority of the Church, but by Christ himself in the stigmatised body of Saint Francis.

Latin Abbreviations

Writings of St. Francis

Adm	Admonitiones
CantAudPov	Canticle Audite Poverelle
CantSol	Canticum fratris Solis
LaudDei	Laudes Dei Altissimi
BenLeo	Benedictio fratri Leoni data
EpAnt	Epistola ad S. Antonium
EpClerI	Epistola ad Clericos
EpCust	Epistola ad Custodes
EpFid	Epistola ad Fideles
EpLeo	Epistola ad fratrem Leonem
EpMin	Epistola ad Ministrum
EpOrd	Epistola toti Ordini missa
EpRect	Epistola ad rectores
ExhLD	Exhortatio ad Laudem Dei
ExpPat	Expositio in Pater noster
FormViv	Forma vivendi S. Claræ
Fragm	Fragmenta alterius Regulæ
LaudHor	Laudes ad omnes horas
OffPass	Officium Passionis Domini
OrCruc	Oratio ante Crucifixum
RegB	Regula bullata
RegNB	Regula non bullata
RegEr	Regula pro eremotoriis
SalBVM	Salutatio Beatæ Mariæ Virg
SalVirt	Salutatio Virtutum
Test	Testamentum
UltVol	Ultima voluntas S. Claræ

Sources for the Life of St. Francis

FAED I	Francis of Assisi. Early Documents. Saint
FAED II	Francis of Assisi. Early Documents. Founder
FAED III	Francis of Assisi. Early Documents. Prophet
1C	Celano, <i>Vita beati Francisci</i>
LCh	Celano, <i>Legenda ad usum chori</i>
VB	Celano, <i>Vita brevior S. Francisci</i>
2C	Celano, <i>Memoriale in desiderio anima</i>
3C	Celano, <i>Tractatus miraculorum</i>
LJS	Julian of Speyer, <i>Vita S. Francisci</i>
OR	<i>Officium Rhythmicum</i>
AP	<i>Anonymus Perusinus (De Inceptione)</i>
L3C	<i>Legenda trium sociorum</i>
CA	<i>Compilatio Assisiensis</i>
LMj	S. Bonaventura, <i>Legenda Maior</i>
LMn	S. Bonaventura, <i>Legenda Minor</i>
SPMaj	<i>Speculum Perfectionis</i> (Sabatier)
SPMin	<i>Speculum Perfectionis</i> (Lemmens)
ABF	<i>Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius</i>
Fior	<i>Fioretti di San Francesco</i>



Cover page: Ġann Nikol Buhagiar, *Triumph of the Franciscan School*. Ceiling painting in Valletta OFM Library Hall

¹² D. SOLVI, *La Regula et vita dei Frati Minori nella Agiografia*, in *La Regola dei Frati Minori*, 131-133.

